

Explore the feelings of finding your first love with Dean Atta

Find community with *Only on the Weekends*!



Level:

S2–S5 / KS3–4

Explore themes of:

√ Friendship √ Family √ Hope √ Self-Expression √ Community √ Sexuality

Subject Checklist:

√ Expressive Arts √ English Language √ Social Studies √ Creative Writing

Note to teachers: These books contain some material that may not be suitable for some students. We recommend that teachers read the books carefully before using it in the classroom or recommending it to students and/or seek parental guidance.

At a Glance

Before watching Dean's event or reading the extract!

1. First loves can inspire a whole myriad of emotions, what kinds of thoughts and feelings might you associate with a story about first love?
2. What does the title mean to you? Does it have entirely romantic implications?
3. Think about the ways in which the characters on the front cover are dressed, what might this reveal about them?

Book Cover Activity: Inside my Head . . .

There are many ways to express yourself! Look at the cover of *Only on the Weekends*. Note down some inferences you can make about the central character's thoughts, feelings, and experiences from the artwork. Consider the following:

- *The colour palette*
- *The contrast between light and darkness*
- *The differences and similarities in the way the characters are depicted*
- *Anything else you find interesting*

Reflect on a special relationship you have with someone, it could be a friend, romantic partner or family member. What colours represent this relationship to you? What book title could express this relationship? How would you express the relationship through an illustration on a book cover? Have a go at creating this book cover using the questions above to guide your artistic choices!

Read the Extract

Taken from the extract on page 66 which begins with 'January Friday Night until page 77 which begins with 'Monday'

Discussion Questions

1. Based on what you have read, what do you think are the key differences in which Mack and K express their feelings for each other?
2. What is the significance of the swan story on page 71? Why do you think K tells Mack this story?
3. How is tension both built and deescalated in the passage?
4. In what ways is Mack more confident and self-assured than K?
5. How does K's behaviour at home contrast his behaviour in public spaces? What might the reasons for this?
6. On page 75, what do you think Mack means by the line 'I think we have come a long way today'?

7. What role do you think Uncle O plays in the K's life?
8. Look at the last poem in the extract on page 77, what do you think it reveals about Mack's character? Would you describe him as a hopeful or measured?
9. What is interesting to you about the way Dean has structured this passage? Do the timestamps create a flowing or disjointed rhythm?
10. Based on this passage alone, what do you think are the potential strengths and weaknesses of the budding relationship between Mack and K?



Dean Atta

Get to Know the Book!

The Theme of Community

Dean's book is not only lyrically written but also encourages readers to envisage inclusive communities of care and support. The book asks us to think about how community can sustain and enrich your life, particularly in emotionally turbulent times.

Only On the Weekends, is about much more than just a love triangle, it is also about finding your community in your close friends and family. Through finding love, Mack also discovers who his true community are.

- Discuss the following questions as a group:
 - *How does community foster identity?*
 - *How can good friends support your mental and emotional wellbeing?*
 - *How does the book encourage inclusive understandings of the LGBTQ+ community?*
 - *Why is community particularly important for marginalised groups?*
- Use these ideas to design an eye-catching poster to express the joy of community and chosen family. Include some illustrations inspired by Mack's friends and family.
- Finally, can you think of any famous groups that represent marginalised communities like the Suffragettes or the Black Panthers, can you design a poster for them?

Your Turn: Create your own Poem!

- Expressing Yourself Through Poetry
The verse of the book ***enables us to understand Mack's inner thoughts and feelings. The book is not just about the love triangle between Mack, K and Finn, it is also about the importance of your friends, family, and community. Create your own poem inspired by what community means to you.***
- Spend a few moments reflecting on who is part of your community and the things that you share with them, write a short poem based on this. You can use any structure you like and using any poetic device such as a regular rhyming scheme, intentional line breaks or an irregular metre (rhythm). Here are some ideas to get your imagination flowing:
 - *Who are your chosen family*
 - *Whoever or whatever makes you most feel like yourself*
 - *A difficult or very honest conversation you had with someone that you love*
 - *The music that inspires you*
 - *The shared habits or rituals that you may have with friends or family members*
- Perform your poem with a partner if you are happy to, asking one another about how you have expressed yourselves in your poetry.

What can you understand about each other from hearing each other's poems?

Reflection and Further Questions

Reflection Activity

Think over all that you have learned. Perhaps you have been inspired by the way in which your partner understands their chosen community? Or maybe your appreciation of what community can mean has been challenged.

In the book, Mack connects to his mother through music. Create a playlist of the songs that make you feel connected to those most important to you.

Lastly, do you have any final questions you would like to ask Dean if you got the chance? Try to think of at least two and make a note of them.

Keep your eye out for more awesome books from Dean, as well as the other authors and poets from the Edinburgh International Book Festival!



Actual Investors